

LUNENBURG BOARD OF ASSESSORS

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2024
LOWER LEVEL, RITTER BUILDING
960 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE

Present Members: Chair Brian Laffond, Vice Chair Sarah Cammer, Clerk John Rabbitt, Interim Principal Assessor Rena Swezey

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting opened at 6:30PM.

OPENING COMMENTS

- Board Comment

John Rabbitt shared an alert that was published by DLS that is sent out on a quarterly basis. There is a municipal empowerment act that reflects changes to procurement rules in terms of competitive bids. John Rabbitt asks Rena Swezey if she has any awareness to which she states no.

John Rabbitt thanks Rena Swezey for her tireless work and ability to give out valuable insight and information.

John Rabbitt questions if there is some sort of cross training program that can be done to help Rena Swezey if she is out sick. There is concern about phone coverage and having someone available to the public in the office if she is unable to be there.

Brian Laffond visited the office and saw Rena Swezey responding and using customer service skills with the residents. She patiently walks residents through processes and Brian Laffond notes that she has been going above and beyond.

Due to technological programs on the consultant's website the disclosure period is starting one day later. Thus, having to extend our disclosure period an additional day to next Tuesday.

- Public Comment

Carl Luck, 50 Sunset Lane, asked why the vision property cards appear to have been removed. The board confirms the CAI card is there, but the Vision card may not be loaded until tomorrow.

Carl Luck asked about what the assessments are based on for lake properties. Rena Swezey confirms that the state excludes anything in the second half of 2023 and anything in the first half of 2021. The lake properties are based on the sales from 2021, 2022, and 2023.

Carl Luck asked where the documents were that were used to manage how they validate or not validate the rating during the review and re-evaluation without a criterion. Rena Swezey states that the field review was done by using the property record cards to check for accuracy.

Bob Pease, 11 Wintergreen Ct., asked when the neighborhood map be made available. Brian Laffond confirms that CAI has created a map. The individual neighborhood maps haven't been printed out because of a significant additional cost from CAI. They are available on the GIS website.

STATUS REPORT FROM INTERIM PRINCIPAL ASSESSOR

Rena Swezey provided a brief summary as she was out sick for a few days.

The impact notices were sent out to the second homeowners. Along with John Rabbitt, Rena Swezey is working to get everything uploaded to the website.

The excise tax bills came out thus creating many inquiries from the public.

Preliminary approval was received from Becky Boucher and her boss (Chris) at DOR. Once the disclosure period has ended and if there is less than 10% in errors the final certification can go forward and they will start getting the files ready for billing.

CURRENT BUSINESS

- Approve Minutes of: Jan. 8, 2024, Jan. 22, 2024, Jan. 29, 2024, ~~Jan. 31, 2024 canceled~~, Feb. 5, 2024, Feb. 12, 2024

There will be no approval of minutes as the Board is continuing to make amendments.

- Status of 5-Year Revaluation – DOR response, Public Disclosure Period.
The public disclosure period was extended by 1 day due to a 1-day delay. The classification hearing is scheduled for the 12th. Nate Cramer will complete a PowerPoint presentation for the classification hearing on the 12th.

- Finalize Impact Statement

This was a carryover from the last agenda and has already been completed.

- Review and Approve Invoices, Expense Vouchers, Payroll, Billing Errors, etc.
There was a bill from Vision totaling \$43,109.50.
There was a bill from MFS for \$2,250. This bill was for hours of phone calls, emails, and spreadsheets.
The Board signed the payout amount for the senior property tax work off program from 2023. The total is under \$9,363.65 for 11 individuals.
There was a motion to approve the senior property tax work off program payout amounts by Sarah Cammer, seconded by John Rabbitt. All in favor.

The Board signed the motor vehicle excise tax bills for commitment number 7 from 2023. There were 135 bills for people that bought newer vehicles later in the year and traded in their prior vehicle. Roll call vote. All in favor.

- Finalize “How to Read Your Vision Card” (Sarah Cammer)

Discussion and edits were made to the document. Brian Laffond suggests adding the page number. Sarah Cammer will send out the edited how to read your vision card once updated.

- Status of Community Outreach

- Status of Website Improvements (Jack Rabbitt)

John Rabbitt met with Kara McCarthy. The layout is completed and google documents are starting to be loaded. The anticipated completion date is in a couple of weeks. There was a brief review of documents to be loaded.

- Senior Center Orientation (Jack Rabbitt) – March 25, 2024.

John Rabbitt provided a copy of a senior center newsletter to the Board. Rena Swezey will be at the presentation and will go through property tax exemptions. There are roughly 9 topics listed on John Rabbitt’s agenda. John Rabbitt anticipated bringing up the topic about circuit breakers. The Board agrees that this shouldn’t be listed as a topic as it doesn’t relate to the Board of Assessors.

- Discuss 41C proposed Exemption increases for FY2025.

John Rabbitt shares that in 2022 there were over 3,000 residents in the town that were over the age of 60. The 41C exemption has had no changes since 1986 and John Rabbitt believes the time for change is now. This will also be discussed at the senior center orientation.

John Rabbit suggests increasing reimbursement by 250 dollars for seniors. This money would be coming out of everyone’s tax bills. Additionally, John Rabbitt suggests decreasing the age requirement to 65 years old.

John Rabbitt will continue to research and re-phrase wording with the help of Sue Doherty. John Rabbitt would like to add this as a warrant article for the Annual Town Meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

- Establish ad-hoc citizen committee(s) to aid board members.

Brian Laffond wants to take advantage of this program but isn’t sure how to proceed. The Board hasn’t had a chance to discuss this so this will be add to future agendas.

- Use of Responses to “extensive citizen questions”.as FAQs.
The Board hasn’t had a chance to discuss this so this will be add to future agendas.

FUTURE TOPICS

- Schedule Future Zoom Session for Public Q&A with Nate Cramer
Sarah Cammer shares that there is frustration because some people have not had closure.
Sarah Cammer believes there should be that opportunity for residents to have a discussion with Nate Cramer.
Carl Luck is still frustrated that we still don’t know what happened to us in 2023 and still has a long list of questions that haven’t been answered but believes Mike Tarello would be the person to answer those questions. The Board confirms that public interaction is not included in Mike Tarello’s contract.
- ‘Work Breakdown Structure’
John Rabbitt wanted to address organization related issues. There needs to be an understanding of who owns which piece of work. For example, the lead assessor is the supervisor for the unit and along with that comes certain functions. There is confusion about who oversees what.

UPCOMING MEETING/EVENTS SCHEDULE

- The below dates are tentative:
 - February 28, 2024- canceled
 - March 4, 2024
 - March 12, 2024 (Joint Meeting with the Select Board)
 - March 18, 2024

CLOSING COMMENTS

- Public Comment
There was no public comment.
- Board Comment
John Rabbitt questions if the updates for abatements are on the vision reports. The Board denies that is any relation to abatements and the vision cards. The only thing about the abatement that changed were factors on the property. Rena Swezey confirms that the abatements have nothing to do with the 2024 valuations.

Sarah Cammer believes the Boards' conversations should not include any personal feelings. She would appreciate it if the Board had a discussion logically and sequentially then had a vote.

ADJOURN

The meeting closed at 9:30 PM.

Motion to Adjourn by Sarah Cammer, Seconded by Jack Rabbitt. All in favor.